

Negro and Radicalism - 1937

Richmond, Va., Times-Dispatch
February 23, 1937

Pastor Asks Better Chance For Negroes

White People Leading Them to Communism, Dr. Hill Says

A warning that American Negroes in all men. When this fact is re- would turn to "Godless" Communism would turn to "Godless" Communism unless the dominant white race gave accord with such a fact, the whole them a better "break" socially and face of things will be changed, the economically was given yesterday by problem solved and the lion and the Dr. Joseph T. Hill, Negro, before the lamb will lie down together." Richmond Baptist Ministers' Conference.

No Change in Attitude

After pointing to specific instances Earlier in his address Dr. Hill observed that there were "still many to show that proper opportunities for people in this country whose problem advancement were not being given was: How long may I deny to the members of his race, Dr. Hill, who is gro all his rights? While the Negro, pastor of the Second Baptist Church, problem was: How may I change my ended his prepared speech with these words: status? What new things must I do to inherit respect and the treatment of a man from my neighbors?"

"Add to all this, we must bear in mind, my brethren, that we claim to be Christians—followers of Jesus. As Christians, you have not given us brotherhood. You have given us an orthodox God, backed by fundamentalism, but withheld fellowship.

The World and Jesus

"Perhaps we are to blame. We said in song, 'You may have all this world just give me Jesus.' You have certainly taken us at our word—you took the world and gave us about all the Jesus you had. But today the young Negro does not sing our song. He wants some of the world with his Jesus.

"Where you fail to give full fellowship, there is a group that does offer it. The Communist offers him brotherhood, fellowship, without Jesus, and it is emptying our churches of its strong young men. Ten years from now, at the present rate of change, you will better understand what I mean. In short, you give God without brotherhood. He gives brotherhood without God. Can you imagine a worse picture than 13,000,000 Godless Negroes?"

The problem of a Communized Negro population is in the hands of the white people, Dr. Hill insisted, adding that there was a solution.

The Attitude of Neighbors

After referring to the plight of the Negro tap dancer, Bill Robinson, who he said, fled Richmond to find ova-

tions elsewhere, he continued:

"Christians will in the end not be tested by the correctness of their creeds, but by the attitude of their neighbors. Any one trying to help the situation must build into the Negro a larger appreciation of his own worth and dignity—give him something to live for. The treatment usually accorded the Negro has tended to make him think meanly of himself. It would interest one greatly to find out how many prohibitions face the Negro here.

"The really great man is not the one who makes others feel small in his presence, but the one who arouses in others the sense of their own dignity and looks for the best there is in all men. When this fact is re-

ve may expect the rank and file to walk in their footsteps." "I have faith in the better element in the South," Dr. Hill stated, "which every day increasing, notwithstanding it is still greatly in the minority."

Dr. C. S. Gardner, formerly a teacher at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., who followed Dr. Hill on the platform highly commended the speech and recommended that particular attention be paid to the Christian fellowship plea.

Bristol, Va., Herald-Courier
February 23, 1937

SAYS NEGRO WILL COURT COMMUNISM

Only Alternative Unless They Receive a Better Break, Hall Declares

RICHMOND, Va., Feb. 22. (AP)—Dr. Joseph T. Hill, pastor of the second (negro) Baptist church here, told the Richmond Baptist Ministers Conference today American negroes would turn to "godless" communism unless they were given a better "break" socially and economically.

"Where you fail to give full fellowship," the negro leader said, "there is a group that does offer it. The communist offers him brotherhood, fellowship, without Jesus, and it is emptying our churches of its strong young men.

"Ten years from now, at the present rate of change, you will better understand what I mean. In short, you give God without brotherhood. He gives brotherhood with God. Can you imagine a worse picture than 13,000,000 godless negroes?"

He said a number of organizations, however, were working for the advancement of the negro race, including the commission on Interracial Cooperation, the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the International Labor Defense.

On the brighter side of the race problem picture, Dr. Hill named 10 interracial organizations which have for their purpose Negro welfare and racial unity. Among them were the Commission on Interracial Co-operation, the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Communist International Labor Defense.

He paid high compliment to what he said was the unbiased, fair attitude of Richmond's two daily papers and to their editors, saying that "the editorials from these men set the pattern of thought, and it is not long before

Selma, Ala., Times Journal
June 13, 1937

Negro Will Speak Against Communism

Rev. Joseph B. Bonner, colored, who is spending some time in Selma in the interest of the Modern Educational and Religious Bureau, Inc., organized many years ago and now waging a vigilant fight against Communism, is addressing numerous groups of citizens of his own race. He will speak Sunday at Mt. Olive Church at Sardis. The Rev. Bonner, who was reared in Selma, heads a large district for the Bureau, being assigned to the cities of Tuscaloosa, Gadsden, Anniston and Birmingham as well as Selma.

In its fight against the spread of Communism, which it believes is dangerous and destructive to American principles and citizenship, the Modern Educational and Religious Bureau, Inc., is attempting to instill in the colored race the knowledge that the South is the natural home of the negro, that the Southern white man is his friend, and that those who would teach otherwise are enemies to the negro's welfare and progress. The understanding that has existed between the white man and the negro, in the 265 years that have passed since the black was first brought here in a savage and heathen state, has created an instinctive friendship and good feeling that Communism threatens, it is believed by the Bureau, which has as its motto "Understanding" in its work throughout the United States.

Tuscaloosa, Fla. Journal
June 17, 1937

COMMUNISM HIT IN NEGRO'S TALK

Dr. Brookers Says Race Owes Much To White Friends

By ERNEST O. SALT MARSH

Dr. J. S. Brookers, negro of Mobile, last night denounced Communism, claiming it was the cause of racial friction.

His address delivered at Allen chapel had as its theme "Americanism vs. Communism." Dr. Brookers stated that Communism destroys

our individualism and makes us mere cogs in a machine. Americanism has on the other hand done much to advance the Negro in educational and social lines."

"Communism," said the preacher, "downs Christianity, destroys God, and drives Him from the hearts of His people; Americanism on the other hand believes in freedom, believes in intelligence, believes in education and religion."

"The American Negro has been civilized three hundred years but the white man has thousands of years to back up his civilization. The American Negro owes much to his white friend." The American white man has given the Negro his conception of God, his civilization. The Negro cannot let any evil such as communism destroy that which he has gained."

NO DANGER BECOMING COMMUNISTS

That was a significant address delivered by a Baptist minister before a Baptist gathering a few weeks ago in North Carolina. This divine has proven that he is a deep thinker with a far vision. He is joining force with those who believe in equal justice for all mankind and a proper application of privileges that are being flagrantly denied a large number simply because of race and color. The speaker, Rev. McNeill Poteat, who for eight years pastoring the Pullen Memorial Baptist Church at Raleigh, one of the most prominent of the white churches, protests the fact that American citizens get all excited about presidential tampering with the federal Constitution, and yet stand by complacent as constitutional rights are denied to millions." In this assertion he aimed specifically at the plight of our people, especially in the south. The liberality in treatment of the Catholic and the Communist is given as an example, but with the admonition that these interests may have an effective appeal for us. In his words Dr. Poteat avers that "The Catholic and the Communist soon will win over the support of the southern Negro." To ward this off, he continues, "If the southern Protestants are to prevent this, they must give the Negro his civil title and discontinue racial segregation in public worship." Every word of the speaker has the proper ring, actuated by a heart influenced solely by pure Christian motive. It should be an easy matter for him to convince his co-workers in the cause of Christianity to believe as he

does with a desire to put these beliefs into action, but the task is a very difficult one. The professed love and loyalty to the cause of the Lowly One, seem not sufficient to accultuate most of the ministers and church followers to become open-hearted towards the darker brother. While the latter is anxious for a more liberal consideration, yet he is not inclined to follow the wake of the Communist, therefore no fear may need be exhibited in that direction; except, possibly, continued advantages being taken, may cause a callousness and diversion.

Belzoni, Miss. Banner
August 19, 1937

Negro Lectures Here

Rev. J. M. Williamson, negro educator from Memphis, delivered an address to a large number of people including quite a few white people on the Communist situation as it is being preached to the negroes. He warned against all these so called beneficial organizations as he has traveled in and among the negroes of the entire South and knows that the organizations are merely to get fees from the local negroes from which they will get no benefit and stir up ill feeling between the two races.

Williamson will speak again in the near future at the courthouse. All negroes and those working negro labor should hear his address.

Watchtower

IT MUST be apparent to anyone who takes the trouble to notice that the Negro, in seeking his full rights as an American citizen, is giving serious thought to joining and working with so-called radical groups.

There was a time when one could scoff at radical tendencies among Negroes, but, while the race has by no means cast off its middle-class and small capitalist allegiances, the trend today is toward radical alliances.

This is being written in Pittsburgh, where the Congress for Peace and Democracy, under auspices of the American League Against War and Fascism (now known as the American League for Peace and Democracy), is holding a week-end session.

Exact figures on registration have not been announced as this

is written, but there are roughly 1,800 delegates in attendance, about fifty being colored. It is significant that a number of the Negro delegates are here not as representatives of Negro organizations, but of mixed groups. A unique case is that of one of the

Ohio branches of the N. A. A. C. P., which sent a white woman delegate.

For Full Rights

The first item to be noted is that the league, as one of its primary principles, stands unequivocally for full civil rights for the Negro. Its language on this point in both its program of action and its declaration of purpose, is unmistakable.

But while the language is clear and the intent of the leadership above criticism, it is also to be noted that some of the members and some few of the leaders are not as straight in their thinking on the Negro question as they might be.

Nothing illustrated this better than the fight over hotel accommodations for the Negro delegates. The blanket and flat refusal of Pittsburgh hotels to accept Negroes was not generally known to the delegates until Saturday. When it was dragged out into the open there was a spontaneous burst of indignation from the floor and the questions of the treatment of Negroes and what to do about it overshadowed the regular program completely. Now, some section of the leadership of the congress, both local and national, feared this eruption and wanted to keep the hotel business as subordinate as possible. They did not for a moment subscribe to discrimination, but they felt their main program was more important and that the hotel issue ought not be allowed to push the main business into the background.

"Strangely Enough"

In this attitude they were joined, strangely enough, by some of the Negro delegates. None of the people in this camp, white or black, seemed to see the colossal irony of attempting to hold a congress on democracy, lambasting with every breath the denial of civil rights, and at the same time soft pedalling the denial of civil rights in the form of hotel rooms to delegates to their congress.

It must be said for the membership, however, that when it had the facts and when it had been advised of a course of procedure, it acted promptly and overwhelmingly. Reservations at one large hotel were cancelled, a picket line of about 300 persons marched around it, a street meeting was held at the front entrance protesting the policy, protests were sent the mayor and the governor, and four suits for damages were filed under the Pennsylvania civil rights law.

When the suggestion for cancelling reservations was made in the midst of the Saturday afternoon session, nearly half the audience arose, left the regular program hanging in mid-air, and tackled the hotel protest.

He's Rightly Wary

The Negro will be won, gradually, by such actions as these. He is wary, and rightly so. He knows that white people have had certain practices hammered into them since childhood, as have their fathers before them. It is hard for them to change. Also, the Negro finds it difficult to change from suspicion to trust. He has been fooled for generations. If the traditional prejudices can be battered down by the radical and liberal elements in their organizations such as the American League, the Negro will become a stalwart part of the movement for peace and democracy.

The pronouncements at Pittsburgh and the participation of Negro delegates in discussion of all topics (not merely Negro items) go a long way toward converting Negroes. The spectre of fascism and of oppression more highly organized than ever before hangs over us all. It is sensible—indeed, imperative—that all who would preserve democracy join together and fight. In Germany and Italy group jealousies and prejudices held the people apart until too late. The dictators had acted. Here we must not allow our suspicions (as Negroes) and our color prejudices (as whites) to hold us apart until we are forced together in some concentration camp.



Roy Wilkins.